DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 216 085 UD 022 271

AUTHOR Kim, Jean
TITLE Development of Asian American Identity: An Exploratory Study of Japanese American Women.
PUB DATE [Oct 81]
NOTE 52p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Acculturation; *Asian Americans; Cultural Differences; Cultural Influences; *Culture Conflict; *Ethnicity; Females; *Identification (Psychology); Japanese Americans; Peer Influence; Political Influences; Racial Bias; *Self Concept; *Social Influences; Social Isolation

ABSTRACT

Interviews with Japanese American women revealed that they developed an Asian American identity by resolving initial identity conflicts, and that the process occurred in five stages. In the first stage, the individuals' interaction with family and friends led to ethnic awareness, or a consciousness of their Japanese descent. In the second stage, contact with white society resulted in a sense of being different from peers, of alienation from self and from other Asian Americans, and of identification with whites. In the third stage, which coincided with the sociopolitical movements of the 1960s and the 1970s, the Asian Americans developed sociopolitical consciousness, a new awareness of themselves and of their rights as minorities, and a feeling of alienation from whites. The fourth stage involved the redirection of experiences toward Asian American consciousness and the gradual emergence of an Asian American identity. The fifth stage was characterized by the women's ability to relate to different groups of people without losing their identity as Asian Americans. Interaction with the social environment influenced the identity development process: in general, women who grew up in predominantly non-white, racially mixed neighborhoods had less painful experiences with identity conflict than those who grew up in predominantly white neighborhoods. (MJL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED216085

DEVELOPMENT OF ASIAN AMERICAN IDENTITY:

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF JAPANESE AMERICAN WOMEN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jean Kim

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Dr. Jean Kim
Director of Student Development
Western New England College
1215 Wilbraham Road
Springfield, Massachusetts 01119

UD 022 271

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the process by which Asian American women resolve their identity conflict around being Americans of Asian ancestry, living in a predominantly White society. The general goal was to find out how these identity conflicts around one's racial membership are resolved, and what the relationship is between identity conflict resolution and the development of Asian American identity. Since there were no known studies on the process of Asian American identity development (AAID), this study was considered to be an exploratory research in this area. Therefore, instead of specific hypothesis testing, the present study sought answers to a set of general research questions: What is the process by which Asian American identity conflicts are resolved and what are its salient aspects? What does the identity conflict resolution lead to? What factors assist the individuals to resolve their identity conflict?

As an exploratory study with the desired goal of generating a theory on the development of Asian American identity, a qualitative research method was used. The work of Glaser and Strauss (1968) on The Discovery of Grounded Theory provided the methodological framework. Specifically, the study utilized an unstructured, focused, individual interview method to gather the data.

Ten Sansei (third-generation Japanese American) women made up the sample. This sample was further delineated into two groups: those who spent their formative years in predominantly White (PW) ethnic neighborhoods and those who spent the same period in predominantly non-White (PNW) ethnic neighborhoods. The criterion used for making this separation was based on self-report. This grouping was made to further examine the influence of subjects' social environment on the process of AAID. Comparative analysis was made on the collected data.

Analysis of the data indicated that the process of Asian American identity development involves five conceptually-distinct stages that are sequential and progressive. These stages are: Ethnic awareness, White identification, Awakening to social political consciousness, Redirection to Asian American consciousness, and Incorporation. In all cases, the resolution of identity conflict around one's racial membership led to the development of a positive racial identity as Asian Americans.

In general, subjects' interaction with their social environment played an important role in affecting the quality of the process of AAID while the categories remained the same. This effect was most evident in the between-group differences of the PNW and PW neighborhood samples.

In general, the PNW group's experience with identity conflict resolution seemed to have been easier, less painful, and less lengthy. They experienced identity conflict for a shorter period of time and acquired Asian American identity at a slightly younger age as a group. The mean number of PW sample was 15.7 years, compared with 4.7 years for the PNW sample.

Statement of the Problem

One of the most critical psychological issues faced by Asian Americans today is identity conflict. Conflict in identity can be said to exist when an individual perceives certain aspects or attributes of him/herself which he/she rejects simultaneously. In the case of Asian Americans, it is the awareness of self as an Asian which one rejects in favor of the White models that are pervasive in our society. The issue here is not lack of awareness of one's ethnic self but how one feels about and values that aspect of oneself.*

This phenomenon of identity conflict is manifested in a number of ways, with varying degrees of severity. Asian Americans may experience identity conflict as a belief in one's own inferiority and those of other Asian Americans, deep-seat feelings of self-hatred, and alienation from his/her racial self, from other Asian Americans, and/or the society at large. These experiences of denial and/or rejection of Asian Americans contribute toward their negative self-concepts, as well as low self-esteem, i.e., negative identity. To the extent that a negative self-concept and low self-esteem are detrimental to one's mental health, identity conflicts, as experienced by Asian Americans, have a negative impact and lower the quality of mental health enjoyed by them.

This experience of identity conflict among Asian Americans is a direct result of their living in this society which is racist throughout its major institutions, culture, and value systems (Knowles & Prewitt, 1969).

---

*Much research done in the area of ethnic identity concludes that a child between the ages of 3-6 becomes aware of different ethnic groups and begins to identify with the appropriate one. However, both the minority and majority children develop preferences for White ethnic stimuli (Clark, 1955; Brand et al., 1974).

Albeit racism experienced by Asian Americans today is more subtle than what they experienced in the past, and racism directed against other racial minorities; nonetheless, its effects can have negative impact on Asian Americans' psychological well-being (Chin, 1970; Sue & Kitano, 1973; Sue & Sue, 1971). Various manifestations of identity conflict are, then, the result of Asian Americans' attempts to make it in the White society, which for the most part, devalues its racial minorities and considers people of color to be aliens and foreigners even though many Asian Americans are/were born here. Identity conflict as experienced by Asian Americans seems inevitable as long as White racism operates in this society, where being different is synonymous with being less.

There are a number of researchable problems related to such an important and pervasive psychological issue as Asian American identity conflict. One of them is lack of a theory that focuses on the process of resolving this kind of identity conflict.* In other words, there is much more information available concerning the ways identity conflicts are manifested, but little data is available on how Asian Americans go about resolving their identity conflicts. We also know that identity conflicts have to be resolved in one way or another and that some Asian Americans are able to work through their identity conflicts in such a way as to achieve a positive self-concept and higher self-esteem as Asians in America. However, we do not know about the nature of the process(es) which led them to that position. The purpose of this study, then, was to examine the process(es) by which identity conflicts experienced by Asian

---

*There are some non-process oriented works available which examine Asian American identity types. Gerald and Stanley Sue's work on Chinese American personality (1973) and M. K. Maykovich's Japanese-American Identity Dilemma (1972) are good examples.

American women are resolved in such a way as to lead to the development of an Asian American identity.

The Study

This was a qualitative, exploratory study of ten* Japanese American women who were born in the United States, are Sansei (third-generation Japanese American), attended secondary schools in the U.S., are of full Japanese American parentage, either have attended or are attending a college or university, now reside on the East Coast, and are between the ages of 20 - 40. Further, half the women spent their adolescence within predominantly non-White ethnic communities, while the other half came from predominantly White ethnic communities. A neighborhood was considered to be predominantly White (henceforth referred to as PW) if there were none or only one other Asian American family and very few other racial minorities in the community. Predominantly non-White (henceforth referred to as PNW) neighborhoods were racially mixed (Blacks, Asians, Chicanos, Whites, etc.)

Subjects were identified through existing contacts the researcher had within the Asian American community in the Amherst, Massachusetts, area and through Asian American student associations within the five-college area which includes Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts. In addition, an inquiry was sent to the "Asian Women United", an organization based in

---

*Although ten interviews were conducted, two of these were eliminated at the point of analysis. One was not included when it was discovered much later that the subject was a fourth generation Japanese American, rather than third. The other was excluded due to a malfunctioning of the tapes during the transcription process. Unfortunately, these two subjects had spent their adolescent years in predominantly non-White neighborhoods, leading to unequal split between PW and PNW sample.

New York City. Once potential subjects were identified, they received either a letter or a phone call which explained what the study was about and asked if they were interested in being interviewed. This process continued until ten women had been confirmed. Thus, the study utilized a non-probability sampling technique, specifically the quota sample.

In-depth, unstructured, focused, individual interviews were conducted to gather data. The focused interview presupposes the subject's involvement in the social situation being investigated (Sjoberg & Nett, 1960, p. 213). Likewise, this study assumed that the subjects have experienced identity conflict over being Americans with Asian ancestry. The purpose of these interviews was to assess their subjective experience as they encountered their Asian-ness. (See Appendix A for the interview guide). In length, the interviews ranged from 2 to 4 hours; and with two exceptions, all were held in the subject's home. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The Sample

The total sample ranged in age from 20 to 37 years. The mean age of the sample was 29.6 years. All subjects came from families where there was at least one other child. The mean number of siblings among them was three. With one exception, all subjects' parents were incarcerated in relocation camps during World War II.

In terms of where they grew up, of the five subjects from predominantly White neighborhoods, three were on the East Coast of the United States and two in the Midwest. Of the predominantly non-White sample, one was on the West Coast and two were on the East Coast. Specific ethnic

makeup of the second group was: mostly Black, Chicano and Asian; Black and Hispanic; and mostly Japanese (Seabrook, New Jersey).

With the exception of the youngest subject, who was a junior in college, all had earned bachelor's degrees. Two had advanced degrees. One has a Master of Art degree, and another, a Doctor of Medicine in Psychiatry. Two of the subjects from predominantly White neighborhoods had completed their bachelor's degree at a university on the West Coast. Again, with the one exception of the undergraduate, all were employed in some form of white-collar work or in professional situations (see Appendix B). Lastly, at the time of the interview, all subjects were involved, to some degree, with Asian American organizations/activities.

Stages of Asian American Identity Development

The result of the analysis revealed that the process of acquiring an Asian American identity and its incorporation with the rest of other identities can be described in five distinct stages.* Furthermore, these stages are temporal and progressive in nature. There were, however, some variations in terms of the length of time each subject spent in a given stage as well as some of the meanings attributed to their experiences. The five stages of Asian American identity development are, in order: Ethnic awareness, White identification, Awakening to social-political consciousness, Redirection to an Asian American consciousness, and Incorporation.

---

*A "stage" represents at least a conceptually-distinct period in subjects' racial identity development as Asian Americans. Each stage is characterized by a coherent set of the components of identity, i.e., self-concept (includes evaluation and behavior) and meaning attribution (ego identity). The contents of these, in turn, lead to specific behavioral manifestations and social consciousness around being an Asian American. These stages then describe the changes in these components of identity that are involved in the development of Asian American identity.

Ethnic Awareness (EA)

This was the first stage in the process and occured prior to entering elementary school. All subjects knew from early on (around 3-4 years old) that they were of Japanese descent. Their awareness came primarily from interactions with family members and relatives. All subjects described their family relationships as very close. For all subjects, their reference group at this point was the family.

Subjects' attitudes and evaluations regarding their awareness of being Japanese Americans varied from neutral to positive. All subjects from the PNW group belonged to at least one all-Japanese American group and participated in various ethnic activities. They experienced much ethnic pride and had knowledge of Japanese culture and traditions. One specific benefit of such membership was that for specified periods, they were in a majority situation and experienced attendant sense of security; and through these exposures, all acquired positive ethnic awareness.

Within the PW sample, two subjects from the Midwest did enjoy similar experiences, as above. However, the remaining three were on the East Coast and were pretty isolated from ethnic group experiences. They did not gain much understanding of Japanese customs, traditions, etc. Consequently, they were not sure what it meant to be Japanese Americans, and felt neutral about it.

Furthermore, during this stage, greater exposure to Japanese ethnicity was related to a positive self-concept and more clear ego identity while less exposure was related to a neutral self-concept and confused ego identity as Japanese Americans. Despite this, all subjects recalled this period of their lives as being pleasant, fun and secure.

For most subjects, this stage lasted until they entered school systems, either kindergarten or elementary. By beginning school, their social environment changed from one of protective, secure home settings to a more public arena which turned out to be less than hospitable. More significantly, this change in their social environment heralded a period of increased, significant contact with the White society. This increased, significant contact with the White society was a critical factor precipitating change in subjects' perceptions of themselves; and consequently, led them from this stage to the next stage. Lastly, regardless of whether their previous ethnic awareness was generally positive or neutral, all were negatively affected by their increased contact with the White society and concomitant exposure to racial prejudices of other people.

White Identification (WI)

This was the second stage in the Asian American identity development and directly related to an increase in significant contact with the White society. The beginning phase of the "White identification" stage was marked by a strong sense of being different from one's peers. This sense of being different was gained mostly through painful encounters with the other children's repeated racial prejudices, e.g., being the object of name calling, being made fun of, etc. None of the subjects were prepared for this kind of reaction to them. They did not understand why it was happening. None knew how to handle it. Most responded by trying to get away from the situation and not fighting back.

> When I was in kindergarten there was this little boy and he used to come out and machine gun my sister and I (sic) all the time. He used to say, "Kill the Japs", and then he'd machine gun us down. My sister and I used to run away from him and run home crying and that's when we were first told, that I can remember, to ignore that type of thing or anybody saying anything to you or doing anything to you.

All subjects suffered through these experiences alone and in silence. They did not share them with other people. Some tried in vain to figure out what was going on without much success. However they tried to cope, the most common response was to personalize their situation. This led them to believe that somehow it was their own fault. It is easy to understand how this can occur, since there was no proper context in which to interpret their experiences.

I. In terms of that period, did you talk to anybody about what you were going through?

S. Nobody. I talked to my mom about it years later. I think I should have, but I felt that it was a syndrome very much centered around the individual. I really at that time didn't have consciousness to think that it had anything to do with society or race relations. I just thought there was something really wrong with me.

- - - - -

S. It was a combination of a number of things. Kids at that age, in fact by the time I got to college there was a tremendous difference, even in Denver in terms of the way that Japanese Americans were treated. When I was in elementary school, there were inevitable comments. Part of that is the age group, because they're so honest. Partially the climate gradually changed over the period of time. At that time the kids would inevitably say things like, "You look like you were run over by a truck, what happened to your nose, slant eyes?", and a lot of other things. I don't think it was a constant experience, but they're the most vivid experiences I remember in elementary school. It was constant enough so that I remember sometime during elementary school specifically thinking about what it was that made me different. And I couldn't figure it out. At the time I decided just having black hair, because nobody else had black hair. Then one time we were playing in a junk yard and this older-class girl said something about, "you Chinaman", and I suddenly broke out in tears. I can't remember if I ran home, or if I waited and then went home and told my mother about it. She eventually told the principal about it. And then the principal hauled this girl in, and I was called into the office too. I remember feeling guilty about that, that she had to be hauled in. So I felt that at the time, it had to be my fault.

Since none of the subjects understood how and why they were different, often this new realization made them feel alone and isolated.

I. So you di ,'t hang out much with your peers or friends?

S. No, I didn't. If I did go to some clubs or organizations, I felt like an outsider. I tried to get involved into a church, and I would become a member of a church. But again, thinking back now, that resolved some of my loneliness. I embraced it heartily, but I still felt like an outsider. So even with the group activities there, I did not feel like I belonged.

This sense of feeling different from other people and not belonging anywhere was a dominant theme experienced by subjects for the greater part of their struggle with Asian American identity.

This period was remembered by most subjects as being a painful time. It was a period when their self-concept began to change from positive or neutral to negative. The sense of differentness carried a negative evaluation. Being different was bad. Consequently, their ego identities were centered around being inferior and being at fault and responsible for things they did not fully understand. Perhaps because it was a painful period, a few subjects defended themselves by denying differences between themselves and their peers. In addition, they repressed negative feelings. The following two quotations from the same subject is particularly illustrative of this phenomenon.

I. Did you see yourself as being different from the other kids, from your peers?

S. I don't think I ever really did. I didn't think I was different as a person. I wasn't different and that's how I dealt with it all the way up through high school. People are just people, some people are fine, some people are mixed up, and that was cool, and some people are this way and some people are that way. Some people liked me and some people didn't.

- - - - -

> My mother made a comment that when I was in kindergarten it had something to do with crayons. I was one of the few people in class who would take the flesh-colored crayon and color my faces in and the teacher called in my mother to discuss this, because all her kids are doing the same kind of pictures but me. I'm there coloring all this flesh. I used to wear down the crayon to a nub; I don't remember that, but this is what she told me.

Being treated as different and inferior eventually led the subjects to identify with White people. That is, subjects gradually internalized the White societal values and standards and saw themselves through the eyes of the White society. Hence, after the initial phase of the realization of being different, the hallmark of the "White identification" stage was alienation from self and other Asian Americans. At the same time, subjects also experienced social alienation from White peers. During this stage, all subjects had subconsciously internalized overt, positive, White images, especially regarding standards of physical beauty and attractiveness. Hence alienation from oneself was experienced primarily as a negative self-image focused around physical attributes.

All subjects recalled their junior high and high school periods, when their peers in general were beginning to take an interest in dating and using makeup, as one of the more difficult times. Being swept up in a general atmosphere of heightened heterosexual interests, these Japanese American women made the inevitable comparisons with prevailing White models and found themselves lacking. This led to at least a brief period of acute negative self-image as Japanese Americans.

> It was really horrible. At school they used to make this thing they called the "list" every week. And they would rate the top ten girls and the top ten guys. I remember that at that time it was very prescribed. What kinds of guys were supposed to be cute or what kinds of girls were supposed to be cute. I remember that the girls were all blonde-haired, blue-

> eyed, surfer types. Every once and a while there would be an oriental woman on the list, but she was so white-washed you knew you couldn't be like her. The guys were all surfer types. Every once in a while there would be a Chicano on the list, and there was one black guy who was on the list... That's the age where people start having parties, playing spin the bottle. I was a big kid more than anything. Here I was working at the stable after school. I'd just talk to my horse. I remember going through a real painful period where I really hated the fact that I was Japanese. I felt that it was the last thing on earth one should be, if you wanted to be liked by a guy. I used to go in the bathroom and go in front of the mirror and say, I could change everything so I could look the way I want to look. I'd start at the top of my head and I'd go all the way to the bottom of my feet. I would say I'll do this and that, and everything was basically saying that I wanted to be White. It was an awful time in terms of that.

Thus, critical factors in precipitating this sense of alienation from oneself were acceptance of White values and standards, the social practice of dating, and an increased attention paid to the physical presentation of oneself. In addition, these experiences of not making the mark and the attendant negative self-image perpetuated already existing sense of differentness.

Their belief of being unattractive was often confirmed by the fact that they were not asked out on dates. In fact, many did not date during this period, or did so infrequently. Although their reference group was White, often they felt socially isolated and, in general, enjoyed little closeness or meaningful friendships with them. This, then, led many to feel socially alienated from their White peers. Most subjects compensated for this by becoming involved in formal, organizational roles and responsibilities within the school as class presidents, class officers, club leaders, editors of year books, etc.

> I think being involved in that student office and that sort of thing served many purposes. That allowed me to feel involved, even though socially I wasn't. I remember some big social; at that time there were certain sororities and so on.

> In tenth grade I was elected to class office, but then when I went to the party for the sorority, I had no social contact. They were all members of the country club and that sort of thing. I didn't get into the sorority, and I felt much ill-at-ease with that group. In fact, I don't know if it's still true, but my father, an upwardly directed, mobile sort of person, because he started out with so little, had to earlier try to get into the country club, and they wouldn't take orientals--that's what they told him. So I never went there again; I remember feeling uncomfortable about that. At least I was in student activities, and also academics. They were the special groups, the advanced placement groups.

In addition, all subjects directed most of their energy toward academic achievement, which became an important goal to strive for. Achievements in areas other than social did play a significant role in balancing out their negative self-concept during this stage. Still, the dominant self-concept as Japanese Americans was a negative one.

> There was a guy who was the captain of the basketball team, very popular, Bruce Ryan. He was very cute, and all the girls had crushes on him, and I had one on him too. For some reason this guy decided to have a crush on me, too. Wow, the captain of the basketball team! He'd walk me home every day . . . We'd talk every day on the phone, and I guess we were an item; it elevated my social status tremendously. Besides being Miss Smarty, all of a sudden, I was Bruce Ryan's girl friend. Then one day we were talking and he told me, you know something, Ann, one of the things I really like about you is that you remind me of my mother. I said, why is that? He said, my mother's Chinese. Everybody had always thought he was White. All of a sudden it blew everything; for, all of a sudden, I realized he wasn't real. God darn it, I thought I'd got a White one. I was crushed; I couldn't believe it. I wouldn't even speak to him after that . . . Nobody knew that his mother was Chinese. I was so mad. Because I felt like either he should have . . . for some reason, it made me feel ashamed of myself. This was something that he had to wait for, like two months, to tell me; then how did he feel about it. I just never wanted to speak to him ever again. Nobody knew what had happened. It was really wild. In a way, it made me feel worse about being an Asian woman. I felt like it was something that this guy had to hide. He wanted his American side to show through.

While all subjects went through the stage of White identification, <u>how</u> they experienced it varied. The major variation was around the degree

and the extent of identifying with White people, and can be seen as either passive or active identification. In active identification, subjects considered themselves as being very similar to their White peers. Apparent differences between themselves and Whites were not acknowledged, at least not on the conscious level. They saw themselves as White and acted as if they were. They also did not want to be seen as Asian in any way.

> My girl friend, she's Chinese, and she really didn't associate with the Chinese. Like me, she associated more with Caucasians. I never thought anything about that. That we were both Asian but yet we were both the same in that we only associated with Caucasians except for ourselves.
>
> - - - - -
>
> This Black guy asked her out and he said, well, why don't we double date, and he brought his friend. So we went out to a function and . . . his friend was Black, too. This guy I was with, his name is Alhaja. He got into this big trip about the Third World. That I was Third World and all the Whites were going to be killed, let's get rid of all of them. I'm supposed to join this whole movement, and if I don't, I'll be killed along with the Whites and all this. We had a long discussion covering a variety of different topics, and I was getting very upset because every time I said to him, well can't you just see me as me, as just a person, and he always said no . . . He said you're a Japanese woman, and I was so frustrated at that point I said, well get out of here. If that's all you can see me as, if that's all I'm worth at this point in time where we've talked all night and you don't see any other things coming out of me, then leave.

Active White identification often led to repression of negative feelings and experiences. Subjects in this category had greater difficulty recalling their experiences during this period.

> I question myself a lot on it because it's a part that upsets me tremendously so that I can't remember, or that I do not want to remember. I'm blocking it in some form or manner in that I do not want to know that. I do not want to deal with that. Maybe I wanted to be White. I don't know. Maybe it wasn't something I was willing to accept of myself, something I hated so much that I was just blocking it out. It was not a happy period of my life. I didn't feel that anything would really contribute to anything I did later on in life. It was a time when I felt college was going to be it.

> I had already been told by my mother that dating was going to be at college. It was like waiting for college because that is where I was going to experience what everybody was talking about.

Interestingly, all three subjects who experienced the stage of "ethnic awareness" as neutral rather than positive, actively identified with Whites. Just as greater exposure to the Japanese community and ethnic activity led to a positive ethnic awareness and less exposure to neutral ethnic awareness, subjects with neutral ethnic awareness actively identified with Whites, while subjects with positive ethnic awareness experienced only passive White identification at this stage. Although none of the subjects were protected from experiencing identity conflict vis-a-vis "White identification", positive ethnic awareness acquired early on seems to have lessened the severity of it.

In passive White identification, subjects did not consider themselves to be White. They may have experienced periods of wishful thinking and fantasizing about looking like White people. They did, however, share in common with the actively identifying group the acceptance of White values, beliefs, standards, and Whites as a reference group.

> My identification from high school, not so much earlier, was more White. I never denied or forgot that I was Japanese American, but I know that I didn't emphasize it to my friends. I remember feeling quite hurt, other people would come over to my house and be surprised that my parents were Japanese. They had only seen me so they had got accustomed to how I looked and forgot about my background. They would come in and be shocked, and I remember feeling very badly about that. I felt that I didn't push any aspect of it, but I never forgot it. I would accommodate to situations around me. I'm now looking back on things from this standpoint and seeing that that's really been a pattern.

Through White identification, then, all subjects experienced, in varying degrees, alienation from White peers. These experiences of feeling separated and isolated, even while being with a lot of people, and a

sense of not quite fitting in anywhere, were a common bond among all subjects.

> I think I felt that I wanted to be part of the group, but I guess I never felt confident of people accepting me, whether it was Blacks or Whites. At the time we would attend Asian functions, the Buddhist church, and I didn't know the other Japanese because the Japanese community was so spread out. As far as kids our age, we didn't know too many Japanese. So we weren't really a part of them either.

There were some inter-group differences worth noting. First was on the onset of the "White identification" stage. All subjects from the PW group experienced "White identification" around elementary school. Among the PNW sample, with one exception who experienced it around elementary school (incidentally, from primarily Black and Hispanic neighborhood on the East Coast), the others did not experience it until junior high school. Of the PNW sample, those raised in a community where there was a larger number of Japanese Americans, they seemed to have been able to delay the effects of their inevitable, significant contact with the White world. So the critical variable here seems to be exposure to the Japanese American community rather than the East Coast versus the West Coast.

Second was in terms of the degree of White identification. All subjects from the PNW group experienced passive White identification; the PW sample was mixed, three active and two passive. The major variable seems to be the nature of subjects' experience of the "Ethnic awareness" stage. Those subjects with a positive ethnic awareness to begin with came to identify with Whites passively--while those with a neutral ethnic awareness ended up identifying actively with Whites.

The third qualitative difference between the two groups was repression of their negative feelings and experiences. While it is reasonable to assume that some degree of repression of negative experiences

exists in both groups, its presence was noticeably greater among the PW sample. Indicators of this kind of repression were: subjects' inability to recall their experiences, being troubled by blocked memories, reported vague awareness of having shelved negative experiences, and use of metaphors such as a "dead period", "felt numb", "missing limb" to describe their experiences. In addition, when the perceptions of subjects' overall experience of identity conflict resolutions were compared, the PW sample tended to describe it as being more painful than the PNW sample.

To recap, this stage was marked by negative attitudes and evaluations of self as Americans of Japanese ancestry, and behaviors which tended to turn one's back on other Asian Americans; and to some extent, other minorities as well. Subjects' ego identities were of being different, separated, isolated, inferior, and misfits who did not really belong anywhere. This was accompanied by a lack of political understanding, a context which could enable them to make sense of their experiences. And without it, none of the subjects were ready to question what it really meant to be Asian American in this society. Nor were any of them able to make a connection between their difficult experiences and being a racial minority. In fact, it is the opportunity to acquire a social political understanding of their social status which enables the subjects to move out of this stage of "White identification" and into the next stage.

Awakening to Social Political Consciousness (ATSPC)

It is during this stage subjects acquire a different perspective on who they are in this society. This new perspective was that they are a minority in this society, and that they were not personally responsible for their situation. Although there was some variation as to how this social

political consciousness of being a minority was acquired, it was a critical factor in facilitating change in their self-concept.

Particularly in the case of the predominantly White adolescent neighborhood sample, a significant event was to change their social environment in such a way as to increase their potential exposure to the Asian American population. This change varied from going out to the West Coast to attend college, where there is a greater number of Asian Americans, to taking courses whose student clientele is predominantly Asian American. Motivations behind making these changes were not always obvious to subjects. In addition, their initial exposure to a group of Asian Americans often was confusing and uncomfortable. These reactions came partly from the subjects' own sense of insecurity around their social identity, and once again feeling like outsiders--this time, among people who share at least a common physical appearance.

I. What was disturbing to you about the class?

S. I think it was the fact that I was uncomfortable in it. There were all these people who looked just like me and they all seemed to know each other. Everyone seemed like they were friendly. And meanwhile, no one ever said hello to me, and I really felt left out. People would make these dynamite statements in class about their ethnicity or background, and I just sat there going "oh wow"; I didn't know this stuff. I felt very lost. I had nothing to say about my parents. I didn't know where they were from. I didn't know what my grandparents had done for a living. Why didn't I know? How come my parents didn't tell me this? Everybody else knows. I was very, very upset; I went back to the dorm, and every week I'd say a little bit to John and Nancy. John is Japanese. I would talk to them about the class, because I was getting more and more upset about it. It finally got to the point where it upset them so much that they refused to talk about it.

However, these exposures to other Asian Americans at least influenced them to begin questioning some of their orientation. But significant

changes in perspective did not occur until they got involved in political movements.

For all subjects, becoming involved in political movements were affected by events occurring in their social environment. Some were initiated into political involvement by either their family members or a close male friend's interest and commitment in a social-political issue. The other subjects were influenced by campus politics of the late 60's and early 70's. They were attending college at a time when student activism was high and centered around the issues of war, Black studies, and women's rights.

There was also a variation among the sample in terms of their level of political involvement. As used here, the range of political involvement included reading and taking courses on racism and the Asian American experience; being a member of political discussion groups and women's support groups; attending demonstrations; helping out on the strike line; working with community groups on special projects; attending meetings, etc. There was no one prescribed way to be involved. What was important was that subjects learned about the plights of oppressed people wherever there was an opportunity.

> Before I returned to college, I was working at the New York public library, in a clerical-type position. I had felt that even though I wasn't involved in the movement directly, that I was around people, working with people, who were the kinds of people the movement would be concerned about, supposed to be making changes for. I felt my working with just regular people was more important. A lot of time when you're involved in a movement, you're involved with a class of people who are very educated, who have more means, and who have the time to do those kinds of activities. They're more privileged in a way because their perspective is different. Working with, particularly a lot of women who had to support their families, who had to work, and being sensitive to their needs, I felt like I really tried to listen to their everyday concerns and how did they respond to things.

I thought that was a lesson to me. I didn't feel that I was missing too much by not going to the meetings, that I was learning in a different way.

A significant theme among subjects' experiences was that of gaining initial political consciousness by involvement in at least one of the social-political movements of the 60's and the 70's, other than Asian American movement. In other words, most subjects' consciousness of being a minority came first, before their consciousness about being an Asian American. Their initial involvements were often in either the civil rights, anti-war, Black studies, or women's movements.

I. What were a couple of events that happened after high school that influenced your feelings about or that directed you toward identifying more as an Asian American?

S. The general political consciousness about race and ethnic background. First I think it was the anti-war movement, the Black studies movement, and the women's movement. Just general consciousness. With the demands for Black studies, this Asian American student group evolved but it was more being led in that sense.

In a few cases, the lack of initial political involvement with an Asian American group was due to a perceived lag in the political consciousness of the Asian American community as compared with other oppressed groups. They found greater support for their fledgling consciousness of who they are within other minority groups.

My work mainly was in the Chicano community. I felt strong about that. I felt that I knew that community more than other communities. I felt in a lot of ways I didn't like the Asian community. A lot of things about, in particular, about the Japanese American community. I'd always felt rejected by them. I felt that first of all they're a really prejudiced group. I knew that just within my own family, we were like the black sheep of the family, the poorest relations. I saw a lot of these attitudes in the way my relatives treated Chicano friends, or things that were said in church. We had a horrible minister at the time. He was a real bigot in a lot

of ways. Like White people but nobody else, just Japanese and Whites. A lot of contradictions. I saw people saying things like, the Chicanos and Blacks have to pull themselves up by the boot strings like we did. You know, just a lot of shit. And this I saw also in high school, aside from the one Japanese woman friend that I had, all the other Japanese Americans were into a tight social clique. They dealt only with, "I'm going to USC and drive a Capri or a Datsun 280Z" or whatever. Not politically aware, not spiritually aware, you know, nothing. They're just aspiring to be Whiter than White and very bourgeois, and I really rejected that. Consequently I wasn't that involved with the Asian community.

Irrespective of the variety of levels and sources of acquiring political consciousness as a minority, this was the stage where subjects shed many of their previously-held values and attitudes. This sometimes led to political alienation from White people and the larger society.

I. How would you characterize your behavior toward White people at this point?

S. At this point, I didn't have too many White friends. Most of our friends were Black, so there were a lot of anti-White feelings. I don't think our family ever experienced a really negative relationship with Whites in general. It was the political atmosphere that made us feel alienated from Whites. We would say anti-White things because we were looking at White people in relation to other people, and in terms of the society. They were responsible for the oppression of other people and for the things that were happening in the world. At that time I put Whites in a general grouping, and they were more the "enemy". Of course, we always had a number of White friends. The groups that we were involved with was integrated. I guess I saw them as exceptions. These people also shared the same political and social philosophies as we did. All the Whites that we were around, especially for their age, were really extraordinary. Their sensitivity to other people and just their analysis of the situation. So we did have White friends, not so much at school. It was more in the context of our political involvement. Still a lot of when I was with my friends, there was a lot of anti-White sentiment.

Through these political involvements, subjects found meaningful support systems, and at last, a context which enabled them to reinterpret their past experiences.

Significant changes occurred during this stage in terms of the subjects' reference group, self-concept, and ego identity. Unlike the preceding two stages, their criteria for the reference group was the political and social philosophy of individuals rather than racial membership. Subjects' reference groups were made up of individuals who are committed to working on a similar social issue and share the same political philosophy. Although not by design, often these memberships consisted of other minorities. Their self-concept changed from negative to positive. They felt good about their new awareness of themselves as a minority, and involvement in a social-political movement. They no longer blamed themselves for their experience of prejudice. Their ego identity was centered around being a minority, being oppressed, not being inferior, and feeling connected to experiences of other minorities.

Lastly, the difference between the PW and PNW sample centered on initiation into this stage. All subjects in the PW sample became involved in it around college years. They were affected by the larger social environment of campus political activism. Subjects in the PNW sample began much earlier at the beginning of high school. One exception was the subject who did not become involved until her junior year in college, which was in 1963, near the beginning of the civil rights movement. Unlike the PW sample, the PNW sample was influenced mainly by the happenings of their own community and their immediate family, and all were initiated into the civil rights movement.

Redirection to Asian American Consciousness (RTAAC)

Although in the preceding stage subjects had changed their identification from White to minorities, they had not yet identified with Asian

Americans. That hurdle was reached at this stage. Their involvement in political consciousness raising resulted in their feeling better about themselves, boosting self-confidence and enhancing self-esteem. These, ir turn, became a fertile ground for the development of an Asian American identity. With the support and encouragement from friends, some of the subjects felt secure enough to look at their own experience. Others were motivated to redirect their energy toward Asian Americans by observing what was going on in other movements.

> The movement was the vehicle to express our concern. That's when I became concerned with Asian identity. We were involved in the Black Nationalist movement, and people would talk a lot about Africa, or about culture, and returning to your tradition. Because most of our friends were Black and changing their names to African names, at that point everyone in our family started to think more about being Asian and what that meant. It made us think for the first time about being Asian. At that time we had learned the language, but we didn't pursue it, so we never did learn. Then I started to feel for the first time to be proud to be an Asian. That was because of the civil rights movement.

One critical step taken, after the decision to refocus toward Asian Americans, was immersion in Asian American experience. The form in which this occurred varied from spending a period of time in the Asian American community, doing a lot of reading on Asian American history, culture, etc. It was an effort to better understand themselves and their people. The goal was to figure out what parts of themselves are Asian and what parts are American.

> I. In looking back, do you feel like you've gone through an identity conflict as an Asian American?
>
> S. Absolutely. I think at this point it's a little muddled because I went through my own identity conflict psychologically, separation from parents, becoming a more independent, autonomous adult. This whole sense of being different was very much fueled by being a Japanese American within a largely White community. Then with political consciousness, going through trying to figure out who I was and where.

I. Where are you? Do you feel like you've resolved that conflict?

S. No, I'm still working on it. I feel that I would eventually like to work in Japan. I would like to spend more time interacting. I was quite gratified at that Asian women's meeting. Some of the other women there, first of all had described some sort of difficulty communicating with their grandmother and some sort of difficulty in having a White boyfriend, and I thought I was the only one! Then there was this one woman who said for some reason she got along better with Blacks than Whites, and she couldn't understand that. I thought, this is amazing, somebody else feels that way. I look forward to more of that kind of interaction in trying to figure out how I fit with other Asian women.

In this phase, many subjects experienced going to the other extreme before discovering what really fit.

I think at the time that I thought more consciously about being an Asian American, when I was in high school, that it made me feel better about myself. It didn't matter so much whether people accepted you or not. I knew who I was. I have just as much a right to be here; I wanted people to see me as an Asian American. There was a point where my sister and I just fantasized about being just Japanese.

Seeing ourselves that we had evolved from this Japanese culture, Samurai, and the tradition, we wanted to see ourselves more as Japanese, even though we had not been exposed to that. It was about the time when a lot of Blacks were talking about Africa. At that point you're looking at all those positive developments from that culture. There was a period in the 60' where there was a lot of cultural nationalism. After that period, I think I realized that we were more affected by the American experience than being Japanese, because we hardly had any of that in our home. Our whole outlook on life was much more American than Japanese. At that point we realized, if anything, that it's a combination. That was more realistic. We had to confront the crisis of not knowing who we were.

Included in this phase was anger and outrage directed toward White society, which occurred when they discovered and allowed themselves to feel some of the historical incidences of racism directed against Asian Americans. Eventually, some were able to work out of this reactionary phase and into a realistic appraisal of both themselves and other Asian Americans.

I. What were turning points in terms of your identifying as an Asian American person?

S. It happened in stages. One little part was saying, okay, I'm Asian American; I want to be with people that are like me, so that was being on the West Coast. Another part was I am an Asian American, and I want to identify myself or that part of myself, which was the name. In that same time period was, I am Asian American, and I'm not those stereotypes. I am Asian American, and it did happen that my parents were put in camp, and I'm mad. And that was a very dreadful thing that happened. Another part was saying to myself, I really wish I could meet a man who is Japanese, one I could fall in love with, or be really good friends with, and not feel so alienated from them.

What I also discovered was that I guess my needs got less driving. I had a need to have friends and to be a part of something. When I was in that dance troupe, it was exciting to be around Asian Americans. What I discovered is that that is a relatively small thing to have in common, that I had a lot more in common with people who were Caucasians in some cases. My friends, who are not Asian Americans, but who had Quakerism in common with me, or just a lot of other things. It was good. I accepted that. That just because we're Asian American, it doesn't mean we're going to be kindred spirits. I kind of got it out of my system. I could talk about it as much as I wanted to.

Self-concept, during this stage, was positive. Subjects felt good about who they were and proud of being an Asian American. They also felt comfortable with both parts of themselves (Asian and American). At last, they felt at home with themselves. One indicator of this shift in attitude about being Asian American was a desire to relate to other Asian Americans.

Their ego identity was centered around being an Asian American. Each subject had her own definition of what Asian American identity meant to her. However, common themes among these meaning attributions were: knowing they belong here and having a clear political understanding of what it means to be Asian American in this society, and no longer seeing themselves

as misfits. Lastly, the mean age at which Asian American identity was initially acquired is 22.6 for the PNW group and 25.2 for the PW group.

> In the context of America, it's a good feeling to have an Asian American identity, finally. Until we got to that point, we didn't know where we fit. We weren't Black, we weren't White, we weren't Japanese. Having an Asian American identity means that you share an experience that other Asians experience. It's a positive side to your makeup.

Incorporation (I)

This was a stage where subjects were able to related to lots of different groups of people without losing their own identity as Asian Americans. Probably the critical factor in this stage is confidence in one's Asian American identity which came out of having gone through phases within their "redirection to an Asian American consciousness" stage. Because they had a clear sense of who they were in this society, their identity was not threatened by prevailing White values. They had a realistic appraisal of all people: White, Asian American, and other minorities. Subjects at this stage did not experience the driving need to either identify with or against White people.

> I'm finding that Quaker meeting is important to me these days. I grew up in this meeting, and I've been home for almost a year now. I've been going more and more, making my own friends there. I feel like I'm all the way there. I'm all the way my own person. But I can't talk about Asian American things with those people so easily. They might understand, but they'd understand from the outside, if they understood. Some of them I wouldn't even want to try talking to about it. I don't have that driving need any more. I don't need to put all my eggs in that one basket.
>
> I don't have to find all my comfort in one place. I don't have to say to myself, I have to be comfortable as an Asian American, as a woman who identifies with feminism, as Quaker, as an East Coaster versus a West Coaster, in this one place right now. But I feel comfortable in all these areas with different people.

They realized that being an Asian American is important but not their only identity. Their reference group varied depending on the particular role they were in at a given time. Socially, none dated exclusively members of one racial group. However, of those who were married and at this stage, one was married to an Asian American and the other to a Black man. The hallmark of this stage was the Asian American identity blending in with the rest of the individual's identities. At the time of the interview, all subjects from the PNW group seemed to be at the "Incorporation" stage, while the PW sample was mixed. See Table 1 for between group differences.

Overview*

Earlier, identity conflict was defined as a situation where an individual perceives certain aspects of him/herself which he/she rejects simultaneously. It was also stated that in the case of Asian Americans, it is the awareness of oneself as Asian which one rejects in favor of prevailing White models. Data from the present study supports this general definition. As speculated, there were important variations as to the degree, length, and manifestation of identity conflict. The following is a listing of some of these manifestations of identity conflict, as experienced by the sample: considering oneself as White, wanting to look like White people, disliking one's physical appearance (e.g., eyes, nose, etc.), shunning other Asian Americans, believing in Asian American stereotypes (especially regarding Asian American men), seeing oneself as unattractive and not datable, experiencing shame and embarrassment over being Japanese American, refusing to deal with being Japanese American or perceiving oneself as being such, having low self-image, seeing oneself as a misfit, and not wanting to associate with Japanese food, culture and relatives.

---

*See Table 2 for stages of AAID

It is important to clarify here that the subjects' conscious awareness of identity conflict was often vague and fleeting in nature. It was not experienced as a constant, sharp sensation. This is partly due to the proper workings of the individual's normal psychological defense mechanism, which often submerged more painful periods and events. In addition, at the beginning of the identity conflict period, the awareness which caused conflict was more a generalized sense of being different from peers and not specifically linked to being Asian. Obviously, the reason for their being singled out was racially based. However, the subjects did not make a clear link initially.

The cause of identity conflict was not from a specific aversion to aspects or attributes of one's Asian self. It was rather a reaction to being exposed to, and an internalization of, White racism while not understanding its dynamics. Therefore, the experience of identity conflict ends when subjects acquired new information which led to a different perspective on their situation. For the purpose of analysis, the period of identity conflict was considered to be during the "White identification" stage.

The present data also suggests that the process of resolving the identity conflict occurs over a period of time, in progressive, identifiable stages, and results in acquisition of an Asian American identity. Furthermore, the nature of the subject's social environment and the availability of certain information played an important role in this process of identity conflict resolution.

All subjects reported having gone through some period of identity conflict. The duration of this varied. Subjects also varied in terms of how they perceived the process of identity conflict resolution. For

some, it was a very painful process over a long period of time. For others, it was less painful. But all perceived the process as involving progressive steps.

However difficult these experiences might have been, they unanimously believe that results of their struggle have been rewarding, enriching, and empowering.

> It took a long time. Painful. But in the end, it was worthwhile. I feel like, that if I didn't get all the way through, and I don't know that I'm all the way through to the other end, but more and more knots are coming undone. And the more knots that come undone, that are off, the better; because I feel like a person with an amputated limb when I think back to that time.
>
> And I knew it. There was a whole part of me that was numb, that I couldn't find. It's like being a cripple or something. It didn't feel good. So I'm really glad.

Lastly, all subjects felt that there was a direct relationship between resolving their identity conflict and acquiring an Asian American identity.

Discussion

In general, identity conflict experienced by these women mainly centered around the period before and during adolescence. It is also a common knowledge that this is a difficult time for most people, often symbolized by struggles with personal identity issues. An obvious question is how does the experience of this sample compare with those of other adolescents? One source of comparison is with Erikson's, The Life Cycle of Identity (1963, 1968), especially his stages four and five, which include the period of early school age and adolescence.

Erikson's stage four examines identity issues of school-age individuals where the primary goal is said to be task identification. This fourth stage begins in the life of the individual when he/she enters some form of formal education (nursery school, elementary school, etc.), and there is danger of falling into feelings of inferiority. Erikson believes this stage to be socially the most decisive (1968, pp. 124-126). This is the period of industry which involves working beside and with other people. It is also a time of first learning about the division of labor, contents of the larger culture, and how to manipulate it. In short, this is the period when the larger society comes to have a significant impact on an individual's life. In addition, Erikson (1968, p. 124) writes:

> Where he finds out immediately, however, that the color of his skin or the background of his parents, rather than his wish and will to learn, are factors that decide his worth as a pupil or apprentice, the human propensity for feeling unworthy may be fatefully aggravated as a determinant of character development.

Indeed, the analysis of the data generally corroborates this impact of larger society on individual subjects. This is evident in the initial phase of stage two of Asian American identity development, "White identification." One critical factor in this phase was increased contact with the White society as the subjects entered school systems. Their experiences of being at the receiving end of others' prejudices are painful evidences of Erikson's quote, although none was consciously aware of this dynamic. Thus, for most subjects, the danger of inferiority potentially experienced by individuals during this stage became a reality. And this sense of inferiority was based <u>not</u> on their inability to identify with task and industry; but rather on treatments they received from others because of the color of their skin and their ethnic background.

Erikson's stage five (1968, pp. 128-132) covers the period of adolescence and also shares some similarity with the "White identification" stage. According to Erikson, the danger of this stage is identity and/or role confusion. Individuals experience the pressure to decide on a future career and direction which is aggravated by the tumultuous tides of puberty. Their primary concern during adolescence is what they appear to be in the eyes of other much more than what they feel inside themselves.

Certainly, subjects in the present study seemed to have experienced similar pressures during the "White identification" stage. All subjects expressed academic achievement as important goals during this period of junior high and high school. However, they also experienced painful periods of negative self-image, derived primarily from comparisons of themselves to prevailing White models, suggesting a greater concern for their appearance.

Erikson believes the universal danger of role/identity confusion during this stage often leads to defensive reactions of "over"-identification with heroes. He further states that it is not unusual for this over-identification to be compounded by previous strong doubts of one's ethnic identity. A period of White identification experienced by all subjects can be seen as a result of this kind of "over"-identification with heroes. In our society, where manifestations of White racism are pervasive, heroes and role models are White people. It causes little wonder to discover that these Asian Americans experienced a general over-identification with White people. Similarly, the difference in terms of severity of White identification does seem to be related to a previous evaluation of one's ethnic awareness. Analysis confirmed that subjects with previous positive ethnic awareness were passive in their White identification, while those with neutral ethnic

awareness actively identified with Whites. Once again, the potential danger of identity confusion was a reality for these subjects.

Erikson states that a related defensive reaction to role identity confusion is an extreme in-group/out-group behavior of adolescents. In their effort to protect themselves against identity loss, individuals can be cruel in their exclusion of others who are different from themselves and manifest a great amount of prejudice. An analysis of subjects' experience during the "White identification" stage also revealed a common theme of social alienation from their peers. This theme of felt social alienation may be derived from being on the receiving end of the others' defensive reactions against identity loss.

What is evident in this cursory comparison between Erikson's stages four and five of the life cycle of identity and stage two of Asian American identity development is that, at least during the period of school age and adolescence, categories of identity problems of the present sample are similar to those of the general population. However, their experiences of these categories seem to be significantly influenced by the existence of White racism in our society. More importantly, a primary reason for their negative experiences seems to be due to their racial minority status.

Another issue needing further explanation is the progression through the five stages of AAID. Specifically, what factors enabled the subjects to move forward and what might happen to those who do not have access to these.

Things that enabled subjects to move from one stage to another can be seen as facilitating factors. Primarily these factors function by influencing their self concept. Especially with the onset of the "White

identification" stage, the subjects' self concept is negative, which is also the beginning of the identity conflict period. The presence of too many painful experiences and the simultaneous lack of personal resources, support systems, or alternative points of view, contribute to the subjects' inability to move out of their oppressive reality. Facilitating factors act to provide some of these resources that had been lacking. These in turn come to have a positive effect on the subjects' self concepts. Their being able to feel secure and better about themselves lead to their ability, as well as willingness, to examine more painful and difficult issues. Therefore, some degree of positive self concept as a racial minority is imperative for the development of Asian American identity.

The major category of facilitating factor is information. This is further divided into ethnic or political information. Ethnic information includes exposure to the Japanese American community, culture, tradition, and the Asian American experience in the United States. In the beginning, ethnic information influenced both the evaluation and the clarity of one's ethnic identity. This was evident in stage one of the Asian American identity development, where the amount of exposure to Japanese American ethnic information determined how subjects would feel and value their ethnicity. Subjects who had greater exposure to ethnic information felt positive about their ethnicity, while subjects with little or no exposure were neutral about their ethnic background.

Evidently, the amount of information in terms of cultural heritage and background is important in helping to establish a base of positive ethnic awareness. Therefore, the first stage of Asian American identity development can be seen as the foundation stage, which influences the quality of the individual's experience throughout the process. This

relationship between the nature of ethnic awareness (neutral or positive) and the experiences of other stages of Asian American identity development was poignantly illustrated by the second stage, "White identification". Individuals with positive ethnic awareness experienced the "White identification" stage less severely, as illustrated by their passive involvement. On the other hand, individuals with neutral ethnic awareness were actively involved in White identification. It seems that individuals with a neutral ethnic awareness lacked a strong commitment to their ethnic heritage and were, therefore, more susceptible to strongly identifying with Whites.

The reader will recall that ethnic information again plays an important facilitating role during the later stages of AAID. The immersion phase is an example of this and is a necessary step in the development of Asian American identity. Pertinent to these later stages of AAID is ethnic information, not only in the form of a specific cultural heritage, but also in the general history of the Asian American experience in the United States.

As used here, the nature of political information is the awareness of the dynamics of White racism. It is this kind of political awareness that enabled subjects to move out of the "White identification" stage. Prior to gaining political information and consequent alternate perspectives, all subjects were affected by the effects of White racism. This is especially visible around the experience of negative body images. These negative images are the result of the subjects' unconscious internalization of society's oppressive messages regarding non-White people. Clearly the subjects did not consciously choose to feel bad about themselves. Rather, it is due to the functionally domesticating effect of oppressive reality (Freire, 1974). That is, oppressive reality absorbs those within

it and thereby act to submerge one's consciousness. And as long as one is a captive within this oppressive reality, no changes are possible. This is why the acquisition of relevant political information is a necessity.

How, then, does the awareness of White racism bring about change? It facilitates change from "White identification" through two major means. First, the new awareness leads to a realistic assessment of one's social position, i.e., a clear realization of the existence of societal blocks and the futility of trying to " pass" or to strive for acceptance within the White world. It is a realization of being stuck.

Secondly, the political awareness of White racism provides alternative perspectives. The alternative perspective is in terms of the re-interpretation of one's experience, as well as the belief that things could be different. Prior to the"Awakening to social political consciousness" stage, subjects blamed themselves for their negative experiences. They were unanimously seen as resulting from personal failings. An alternative perspective here, then, is to know that these negative experiences are societally based rather than personal. This realization releases the individual from unnecessary guilt and feelings of inferiority. Similarly, by providing a different analysis of the past and present situation, political awareness also facilitates the generation of new solutions to old problems which lead to a belief that changes are possible.

Another alternative perspective gained is the discovery of a different reference group other than White people in general. Individuals began to realize that they were not alone in being oppressed and found that there were people who will accept them as they are. For many subjects, this was the first time they did not feel like an odd person. This new reference

group tended to be of a group of people who shared the common concern of dealing with White racism and other forms of oppression. More often than not, they were members of other minority groups.

Political information thus facilitates a change from White identification by enabling the subjects to name and to understand their world as they have experienced it. Freire (1974, pp. 100-101) considers this as a first step toward freedom. He goes on to say:

> Only as this situation ceased to present itself as a dense, enveloping reality or a tormenting blind alley and men can come to perceive it as an objective problematic situation--only then can commitment exist. Men emerge from their submission and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled. Intervention in reality--historical awareness itself--thus represents a step forward from emergence, and results from the conscientization of the situation.

Let us know discuss what might happen to those without access to these.

It is possible for an Asian American to be stuck in one of these stages depending on his/her social environment. For example, a person may remain in stage one, "Ethnic awareness", if he/she is raised and living in a predominantly Asian ethnic community having little direct contact with the larger society, and if the community does not have significant level of social political activism. These individuals may have a strong sense of their particular ethnic identity, but not a racial identity. That is, they may not have a consciousness of societal ramifications of being a racial minority, nor identify with other Asian ethnic groups. Most likely they will not identify with the struggles of other racial minorities either.

Individuals may also get stuck in White identification stage if they do not have access, particularly, to political information. Although

the present sample is college educated, this is probably not a necessary condition in order to move out of this stage. However, they must have access to similar types of information. Clearly, for the majority of the present sample, being in college made accessing easier due to greater learning opportunities. On the other hand, types of opportunities available in college campuses are a variable, depending on the dominant institutional politics and the general political climate of the larger society. The effect on subjects' experiences of the social political events of the 60's and the 70's is a clear indication of this link.

Equally relevant is the notion that college education is not a sufficient condition for moving out of the "White identification" stage because individuals can choose what learning opportunities they'll participate in. Through a selection process, it is possible for individuals to not be exposed to political information as defined in this paper. No data is available from the present study to hypothesize as to reasons for individual variations in this regard. Phenomenologically, it is evident that there are many Asian Americans whose dominant stage seems to be in the "White identification".

It is also possible for individuals to remain in stage three and not move on to stage four, "Redirection to Asian American consciousness." This is mainly a function of the availability of specific information and learning opportunities on the Asian American experience. Equally critical is the availability of other Asian Americans at a similar consciousness level to effect this move. It is probably difficult, if not impossible, to develop a collective consciousness and identity in a vacuum or in isolation from other Asian Americans. As noted earlier, all subjects were involved to some degree in Asian American organizational

activities at the time of the interview.

Lastly, the major implication of this study points to educational communities. Current findings support the value and importance of including non-White ethnic studies in the overall curriculum. For members, these can play a critical role in enhancing their self-concept and developing clear social identities. Relatedly, the positive effects of adopting truly multi-cultural curriculum to improve the quality of education and promote individual growth is also suggested. In addition to courses on cultural heritage, our educational opportunities should include courses on minority group experiences in America and on White racism awareness.

The timing of these learning opportunities is also important. An ideal period to offer these courses is to start in elementary school. Courses on basic racism awareness and minority group experiences should be offered in junior high and high school as an integral part of American history.

Future Studies

As an exploratory research, the present study has been successful in its goal of generating a theory on the development of Asian American identity. Appropriately, however, the study raises more questions than provide answers. Such as, will the process of AAID be the same for other Asian ethnic groups, or even other generations of Japanese Americans. What about the sex difference? That is, do Asian American men experience the same process of identity development? Do the effects of White racism affect the identity development process of Asian Americans similarly regardless of their gender? During the process of interviewing, some

tangential information about male siblings of subjects did emerge which indicates that Asian American men's experience may be different, if not in kind, then at least in quality.

If the effect of White racism is a primary factor negatively influencing the normative identity development crises of Asian American individuals, how long does it take for an Asian American to be thusly affected by racism? That is, will the experience of AAID be the same for all generations of Asian Americans? Or will there be differences between foreign-born and native-born Asian Americans?

What kinds of identity conflict issues arise for Asian Americans who are from interracial marriages? How do they resolve them? And what is the product of that resolution? Another promising area of restudy seems to be the effect of the social environment on AAID, vis-a-vis the effect of different types of neighborhoods during the formative years. Also, what about those Asian Americans who are not college educated? What is their experience like?

All these questions are potential topics for future studies in the area of Asian American identity. What is evident is that beyond autobiographical essays and poems, not much information is available on the process of AAID. The present study should be considered only as a very beginning point. Its purpose is to open up inquiry and dialogue around the issue of AAID and to stimulate more research in the area.

TABLE 1: BETWEEN GROUP DIFFERENCES

	Predominantly White					Predominantly Non-White		
Years of identity conflict	12½	13	14	24	15	3	8	3
		M = 15.7 years				M = 4.7 years		
Beginning of identity conflict	Ele.[1]	Ele.	Ele.	Ele.	Ele.	J.H.S.[2]	Ele.	J.H.S.
Beginning of ATSPC[3] Year	Col.2[4] 1973	Col.2 1979	Col.2 1973	After Col. 1973	Col.4 1968	H.S.2[6] 1972	H.S.1 1964	Col.3 1963
Approximate age of initial A.A.I.[5]	21	20	25	31	29	21	20	27
		M = 25.2 years old				M = 22.6 years old		
Age present	26	20	30	37	32	24	31	37
		M = 29 years old				M = 30.6 years old		

[1]Ele. = Elementary school
[2]J.H.S. = Junior high school
[3]ATSPC = Awakening to Social Political Consciousness
[4]Col. = College 2 = Sophomore 4 = senior 3 = junior
[5]A.A.I. = Asian American identification
[6]H.S. = High School, 2 = Seond year in High School, 1 = First year in High School

TABLE 2: STAGES OF AAID

Items \ Stages	Ethnic Awareness	White identification	Awakening to Social political consciousness	Redirection to A.A. consciousness	Incorporation
Social environment	home, family, Japanese groups	Public arena, school systems, heightened heterosexual activity and interest	social political movements, campus politics	Asian American community	general
Critical factor	Exposure and participation in Japanese ethnic activities	increased contact with White society, acceptance of White values and standards	gaining political conciousness on being minortiy	immersion in Asian American experience	firm A.A. identity, need to be whole
Self-concept	< positive > neutral	negative self image, particularly body image	positive as minority	positive as Asian American	positive as a person
Ego identity	< clear as person of Japanese heritage > less clear of of meaning	being different, misfits, inferior, isolated, personally responsible	minority, oppressed, not inferior, not personally responsible	Asian American, sense of belonging, proud	whole person with Asian American as important but not the sole identity
Reference	family	White people society in general	individuals with similar social political philosophy	Asian Americans especially those at similar levels of identity development	people in general, may vary with role situation
Hallmark of the stage	discovery of ethnic awareness	realization of differentness, alienation from self and other Asian Americans, and social alienation from Whites	gaining new political perspective, sociological imagination (change from personal to social perspective)	personal and cultural exploration, appreciation of A.A. experience	blending of Asian American identity with the rest of individuals' identities

Jean Kim © 1981

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Demographic Characteristics:

When were you born, where? Where were your parents born, mother? father? What generation of American are you? How many siblings are in your family? Where do you live now? What is the racial and ethnic composition of your present community? What is your occupation? What is your level of education?

Community Characteristics During Childhood and Adolescence:

Where did you attend school (elementary, junior high, high school)? What was the racial and ethnic composition of these schools? your neighborhood? How would you describe the area where you grew up?

Experience During Adolescence:

How would you characterize your adolescent years? What were some of the significant events or crises as you recall during this period? How did you resolve them? Who were the significant people in your life at that time? What was your relationship to them? What was your perception of their feelings and expectations of you? How did you react to these? What did you do? What beliefs and/or feelings did you have about these people who were important to you? What beliefs and/or feelings did you have about yourself? Your peers? What ethnicity were the majority of your friends? What were your goals during this period?

Experience of Identity Conflict:

Did you ever consider yourself as "different" from the other kids? How? When did you first realize you were different from other people? How did you feel? What did you think? What did you do? What effect did this event have in your life, your feelings about yourself, your family? Were there other critical events that you recall in terms of your encounter with your Asian-ness? What were your goals during this period? What did you think of Asian Americans? How did you feel about being an Asian American during this time? In what ways did these feelings translate into behavior? How would you characterize your behavior toward Whites, members of other racial minorities, with other Asian Americans? When did these change? What was the event? What did you think, feel, do? Who were your role-models and significant people in your life? In what ways did these people impact on your attitude and behavior about yourself? Did you ever wish that you were not an Asian American? How come? Do you believe that you have to adopt any White values in order to make it in this society? Do you feel that

you have had to reject any of your family's values in order to make it in this society? What were they? Did your parents ever convey to you how they felt about being Asian Americans? What did you feel? How was this conveyed? In what ways would you say these events, behaviors, attitudes of yours represent identity conflict over being an Asian American? How were you able to resolve these identity conflicts? What did you do?

Political Consciousness:

Were you ever aware of any of your family members having encountered discrimination because of their ethnicity/race? How did they deal with them? Do you believe that you have ever experienced discrimination because of your race? When did you first begin to see yourself as a racial minority? Who or what were the person(s) or event(s) that helped you to gain this perspective? What political movements have you been involved with? How did that happen? What has been your relationship to the civil rights and the Black movement of the 60's? What was happening to you at this time? What was happening to your community and society at large? Do you consider yourself a feminist? In what ways? What do you know about the Asian American movement? What do you think about the Asian American movement? What effect do you think your involvement in other political movements has had on your attitudes about being an Asian American woman?

Asian American Identity:

Do you identify yourself as an Asian American? What does it mean to you to have an identity as an Asian American? Has this meaning changed over the years? How? What do you think are the contents of an Asian American identity? How are they expressed behaviorally and attitudinally? Would you say there is a relationship between resolution of identity conflict as an Asian American and acquiring Asian American identity? What is the relationship? What do you view to be significantly different about your background and experience which allowed you to develop an identity as an Asian American woman? What do you like and appreciate about yourself? How do you feel about yourself in general? Could you describe what it is about you personally which has made it possible for you to develop a positive self-concept as an Asian American woman? In looking back, are there one or more significant events that you feel played a crucial role in your achievement of an Asian American identity? How would you characterize your overall experience in achieving an Asian American identity? What would have been helpful to you in this process?

Appendix B: Demographic Profile of the Sample

Adolescent Community (A.C.)

	Predominantly White					Predominantly Non-White		
A.C. Location	East	East	East	Mid-West	Mid-West	West Black, Chicano & Asian	East Black & Hispanic	East Japanese
Age M=29.6	20	26	30	32	37	24	31	37
# of siblings M=3	3	2	1	2	4	3	5	4
Parents in camp	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Own family*	S	S	S	S	M(2)	M	S.P.(1)	S.P.(1)
College degree location	Process East	BA East	BA West	BA+ West	BA East	BA East	BA+ East	BA East
Occupation**	S	P	P	C	P	P	C	P

* S = Single M = Married () = Number of children S.P. = Single Parent

** S = Student P = Professional C = Clerical white collar

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blumer, H. Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969.

Caplan, N. and Nelson, D. S. "On Being Useful--the Nature and Consequences of Psychological Research on Social Problems." American Psychologist 28 (1973).

Chin, P. N. "The Chinese Community in L.A." Social Casework 51 (1970).

Dashefsky, Arnold (ed.). Ethnic Identity in Society. Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Co., 1979.

Erikson, Erik H. Childhood and Society. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc. 1963.

_____. Identity: Youth and Crisis. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc. 1968.

Fong, Pauline L. "Identity Conflicts of Chinese Adolescents in San Francisco." In Minority Group Adolescents in the United States. Edited by E. Brody. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1968.

Fox, David Joseph and Jordan, Valerie Barnes. "Racial Preference and Identification of Black, American Chinese, and White Children." Genetic Psychology Monographs 88 (1973).

Freire, Paulo. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: The Seabury Press, 1970.

Fujitomi, Irene and Wong, Diane. "The New Asian-American Women." In Asian-Americans: Psychological Perspectives. Edited by S. Sue and N. Wagner. Palo Alto, Calif.: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1973.

Glaser, Barney G. and Strauss, Anselm L. The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1968.

Hauser, Stuart T. Black and White Identity Formation. London: Wiley, 1971.

Iannaccone, L. "The Field Study in Educational Policy Research." Education and Urban Society 7 (1975).

Knowles, L and Prewitt, K. Institutional Racism in America. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969.

Maruyama, M. "Yellow Youth's Psychological Struggle." Mental Hygiene, 1971.

Maykovich, Minako K. "Political Actuation of Japanese American Youth." Journal of Social Issues 29 (1973).

Merton, R. K. The Focused Interview. New York: Free Press, 1956.

Ogawa, D. "The Jap Image." In Asian Americans: Psychological Perspectives. Edited by S. Sue and N. Wagner. Palo Alto, Calif.: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1973.

Sheriff, M. and Sheriff, C. "Black Unrest as a Social Movement toward an Emerging Self Identity." Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences 15 (1970).

Sjoberg, Gideon and Nett, Roger. A Methodology for Social Research. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968.

Sommers, V. S. "Identity Conflict and Acculturation Problems in Oriental Americans." American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 30, 1960.

Sue, D. W. "The Impact of Two Cultures on the Psychological Development of Asians in America." In Counseling American Minorities: A Cross Cultural Perspective. Edited by Donald R. Atkinson, George Marten and D. W. Sue. Dubuque, Ia.: Wm. C. Brown, Co., 1979.

Sue, S. and Sue, D. W. "Chinese-American Personality and Mental Health." Amerasia Journal 1 (1971): 36-49.

Sue, S. and Kitano, H. H. L. "Stereotypes as a Measure of Success." Journal of Social Issues 29 (1973).

Sue, S. and Wagner, N. (eds.). Asian Americans: Psychological Perspectives. Palo Alto, Calif.: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1973.

Suzuki, Bob H. "The Broader Significance of the Search for Identity by Asian Americans." Asian American Conference, Yale University, New Haven, 1975.

Yamamoto, J. "Japanese-American Identity Crisis." In Minority Group Adolescents in the U.S. Edited by E. B. Brady. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1968.